1:Sanders Z-5,4 (1952-1959) 1962 EH1 Greece EH1

Marriage

Even before an engagement is agreed upon, relatives check the kinship of the boy and girl to be sure that they are not too closely related to marry. In Mesolongi, for instance, a few years ago those related up to the fourth degree could not marry, but this is beginning to break down somewhat. Around Arta second cousins may marry, but in many parts of Macedonia there are restrictions up to third cousins. Generally throughout Greece, young people with the same godparent are considered "spiritual brethren" and cannot marry. It does not take long for some knowledgeable relative to review the kinship lines and decide whether the engagement would violate local customs, which are as important as the official church position on this matter.

Panos D. Bardis, in writing on the main features of the Greek family during the twentieth century, summarizes the teachings of the Greek Orthodox Church regarding the goals of marriage as follows: 1. increase of the human race; 2. promotion of mutual helpfulness among the members of the family; 3. restraint of passions; 4. Christian training of the young. He points out that some of these goals have been only partially achieved because of the patriarchal and authoritarian nature of the Greek family, but they remain those set forth by the church. Bardis also makes a useful summary of the essential elements of the engagement and wedding ceremonies:

1. Rings: the man's ring is of gold and symbolizes the sun, whereas the woman's ring is of silver and symbolizes the moon.
2. Crowns: these denote the marital bond and the glory of the sacrament. In Greece, these crowns are made of flowers, or evergreen, while the Russian Orthodox Church in earlier days preferred replicas of the Royal Crown.
3. Wine: this is offered to the couple in remembrance of the marriage in Cana, and symbolizes their mutual sharing of unhappiness in life.
4. Public confession of consent by both parties.
5. Blessing of the priest, which is considered very essential and is repeatedly stressed in the writings of the early church fathers.[9]

If one bears these five points in mind, the description of a peasant wedding takes on more meaning and makes greater sense to one not brought up in the Orthodox faith. Furthermore, it is apparent that the church ceremony itself is only one part of the unfolding drama in which the whole village takes a keen interest. Here, in free translation, is a day-by-day account of what happened in the village of Artotina in Aetolia, just prior to the outbreak of World War II.[10]

When the bride is ready with her dowry and the amount of money has been given to the groom's family, the date of the marriage is fixed, always on a Sunday unless one of the two people has been married before, in which case the

5:Hammond M-5 (1948-1950)1956
EH1 Greece EH1

more than 200 words in all. Amongst the second and third generations of Orthodox *emigrés* in America to-day English is being widely used as a liturgical language.

This being so, it is reasonable to presume that where an ancient liturgical language is retained (as in Greece, for example) it is still tolerably intelligible to the ordinary people. It may indeed be questioned whether, except for brief epochs of the Church's history, her common prayer has ever been cast in a language wholly familiar to the unlearned. This is not the place to embark upon a description of the present condition of the Greek language: the subject is peculiarly complex and, in certain of its aspects, highly controversial. Suffice it to say that the *katharevousa*, or 'purified' language, which is still, despite many violent assaults, the normal medium of literary expression, differs comparatively little from the formal Greek of the Byzantine writers. The leading articles of a newspaper such as *Kathimerini* (the Greek equivalent of *The Times*) can be read with fair comprehension by an average classical scholar. The *demotiki*, or popular language, on the other hand, has undergone a far greater transformation since the days when the liturgies were composed, so that a comparison of the two forms of Greek will reveal very wide differences both in grammar and vocabulary.

Both *katharevousa* and *demotiki* are current to-day, and an educated Greek will be familiar with either. A Greek bishop, for example, will normally use, within the privacy of his own metropolis and in everyday conversation with his people, a Greek which he would never dream of employing when writing to a fellow *despotes* or to the Holy Synod. Amongst the ordinary people, however, at any rate since the popular language ousted the *katharevousa* from the primary schools, the latter is never used; the average shepherd or grocer would be hard put to it to compose a letter in the sort of Greek that may be heard in the lecture rooms of the national university.

This does not mean, however, that the Greek of the liturgies is more or less incomprehensible to the common people. Far from it. It is often quite startling to find how much of the Psalter, the New Testament and the Church's prayers the Greek peasant has made his own. The fact is that in the ordinary Greek village the children spend so much time in church from earliest infancy onwards that they inevitably become familiar with the language that is used there. By the time they grow up they will commonly know much of the liturgy and the scriptures almost by heart. If anyone should doubt this let him

5:Hammond M-5 (1948-1950)1956
EH1 Greece EH1

consider the family prayers and personal devotions of the Greek laity. These are made up wholly of prayers, psalms and hymns drawn from the liturgy: scarcely ever (save in certain circles influenced by the new movements) do they include vernacular prayers. The *Hiera Synopsis*—the laity's manual of prayers—consists entirely of extracts from the Church's liturgy. The form of evening prayer commonly used in a Greek household is simply a shortened version of the Little Compline which closes the day in every monastery.

The 'liturgical' approach to the Bible has, it must be confessed, certain limitations. If the laity were present at *all* the services of the Church they would indeed acquire a working knowledge of the greater part of the holy scriptures. In practice, however, they will normally hear only those portions of the Old and New Testaments which are read on Sundays and holy days at the eucharistic liturgy and (depending on the regularity of their attendance) at mattins and evensong. Since 'Bible-reading' is little practised outside the new movements (where, indeed, it is universal) this inevitably means that the majority of the Greek laity, being wholly dependent upon the lections which occur in the course of the regular liturgical cycle, are unfamiliar with considerable portions of the Bible, particularly of the Old Testament.

It is, moreover, almost certainly true that the common people understand very imperfectly some of the elaborate 'canons' which recur only once every year (and then generally at mattins when few of the laity are present in church). But, as W. J. Birkbeck remarks not inappositely of the Russian muzhiks of his day: "I myself have heard a great many more quotations (and intelligent quotations too) made from the canons . . . of St. Cosmas and St. John Damascene than I have ever heard from the Norfolk peasantry, amongst whom I have lived all my life, from the Hebrew prophets, which are read, or ought to be read, in all our churches throughout the months of September and October!"

While many a Greek Christian's familiarity with the Bible will extend only to those passages which are read during the course of the liturgy, his *theological* understanding of the scriptures is commonly far deeper than that of the, often better-informed, English churchman. Unlike so many an earnest student of the Bible, he realises—however obscurely—that the divine history is related at every point to what goes on week by week in his parish church: that it is only to those who are baptised into Christ's saving death, who are living in the mystery revealed in the Church, that the full meaning of the scriptures is laid bare.

5:Hammond M-5 (1948-1950)1956
EH1 Greece EH1

792
[779]

labour of the angels. A great part of the day and night he will henceforth devote to the *opus Dei*: the chanting of the divine office. For the rest, he will practise the prayer of Jesus and will be nourished upon the Gospels and the Psalter, the *Philokalia* (a collection of the writings of many of the great ascetics and fathers of the Church), and certain classic works of monastic spirituality—notably the *Ladder of Perfection* of St. John the Scholastic, Abbot of Sinai, which is read in every Orthodox monastery during the great lent.

Within this traditional framework there exist considerable variations suited to differences of personal vocation. Though the *coenobium*, or monastery of the common life (that form of eastern monachism which owes the greatest debt to the legislation of St. Basil and St. Theodore of Studium), has commanded the greatest influence, the coenobitic life is only one among several traditional patterns of asceticism which lie open to the Orthodox monk. Side by side with the regular discipline of the community there exist other forms of the monastic life which trace their origin not to Cappadocia but to the primitive hermits of the desert; and despite St. Basil's admiration for the coenobitic life it can scarcely be questioned that, amongst the generality of Orthodox Christians, it has commonly been the solitary who has been accorded the greatest veneration and respect.

To this day, a large coenobium (such as one finds on Mount Athos, for example) will as a rule possess several small, dependent *sketai*, where two or three monks pursue a manner of life that has seen but little change during the course of 1,500 years, and may have in addition one or two anchorites nesting in inaccessible caves amongst the rocks and following an observance of incredible austerity; these are the μεγαλόσχημοι—monks of the great or angelic habit—of whom Covel observes that they "never eat at most above three times in a week; whence they are emaciated to meer Skin and Bones before they quite leave this world; this extravagant Fasting being counted the very heighth of an Aschetick Life."

Such extremes of asceticism, needless to say, are not for all men. Towards the end of the fourteenth century there made its appearance on the holy mountain a somewhat relaxed form of the monastic life known as the idiorrhythmic. The idiorrhythmic monk is literally one who follows his own rhythm. He owns personal property and takes his meals (prepared, if he be well-to-do, in his own kitchen by a monkish servant), not in the refectory but in the privacy of his own rooms. The

5:Hammond M-5 (1948-1950)1956
EH1 Greece EH1

793 874 177 schools is characterised for the most part by a somewhat arid academicism. During the nineteenth century a theologian who went abroad for post-graduate studies went almost as a matter of course to Germany; and, although this is no longer so, the shadow of Harnack still lies across the threshold of the theological school at Athens. "Berlin, Leipzig, Jena, Halle, etc.", wrote Dr. Adrian Fortescue in 1907, "are full of Greek students, who with the versatility of their race, very soon learn to talk German perfectly, and to think and argue about theological questions like German higher critics!"

779 177 874 Greek academic theology, though distinguished by great technical competence and erudition, and considerable familiarity with the critical work which one associates with the German schools of the latter part of last century, is largely deficient in those qualities which have made the work of certain Russian theologians of the diaspora of such absorbing interest for the western Christian. The Greek theologian, while he has benefited incalculably by his scientific training in the schools of Germany, has scarcely as yet been forced back upon his own proper tradition by the pressure of an alien environment. With few exceptions, moreover, he is curiously out of touch with recent tendencies in western theological thinking: often he seems to be a generation behind the times, unaware that critical theories no longer hold the field in the schools of Paris and Oxford—not to mention Geneva.

How long this state of affairs will last it is difficult to say. The present isolation is not hard to understand if one takes into account the effect of the war years and the lack of contact—even on the intellectual level—between the Greek professors and those Roman Catholic scholars whose work has been so important for the west during the past decade, and whose exchanges with certain Russian theologians have proved so mutually rewarding. It may well be that the links now being forged between Athens and Paris—and in particular with the Russian Academy of St. Sergius—are of crucial importance for the future. At present, it must be confessed, the transition from the theological climate of Orthodox Paris to that of the Athenian schools is apt to be somewhat disappointing to the Frankish *theologos* to whom a first glimpse of the wholeness of Orthodoxy has come as the revelation of a long-forgotten realm. The theology of the schools seems to be earthbound and wholly academic: a theology of the manuals which bears little relation to holy living.

779 794 The theoretical character of much contemporary Greek theology has

5:Hammond M-5 (1948-1950)1956
EH1 Greece EH1

had regrettable consequences for the development of the new movements, with which the theological schools have, in general, little vital connexion—although more than one professor of the theological faculty at Athens has played an important rôle in their work and organisation. In many quarters—and especially, perhaps, within Zoë circles—a sense of the apparent irrelevance of this theoretical science to practical piety has given rise to an impatience with all theological questions. We must, it is said, be *practical*—and this theology of the schools is not practical; it is a theoretical science wholly unrelated to the urgent problems which are the daily concern of the preacher and the confessor. Such an attitude cannot but strike one as curiously out of place in an Orthodox *milieu* and is not without its dangers.

A few of the clergy go abroad to continue their studies after graduating from the Greek theological schools. Many a young layman is sent to western Europe or America for post-graduate study in the hope that upon his return to Greece he will offer himself for ordination; but a first acquaintance with ecclesiastical conditions very different from those to which he has been accustomed (particularly in the matter of the status of the married clergy and their field of activity) can easily have an unsettling effect upon the potential *despotes*, and it is not unknown for a young graduate, not conscious of a very definite call to the celibate life, to waver in his first resolve of becoming a priest, after two or three years in England or America.

Apart from the minority who go abroad after leaving the university, the celibate clergy normally pass immediately to an episcopal household without further study. Until quite recently there was nothing in Greece comparable to the English theological college. Since the war, however, there has been opened in Athens an establishment which approximates in some measure to the English institution. This is the 'School for Preachers' which is housed in the hostel of the Apostoliki Diakonia: a fine modern building occupying two sides of the quadrangle at Moni Petraki and overlooking the garden of the British School of Archaeology. Though completed some years ago, it was long requisitioned as a military hospital, and it was not until the early part of 1950 that the whole building was made available to the Church.

The School for Preachers provides a two-year course of study (primarily of a pastoral character) for men who have already graduated from the theological school of the university. In 1950 a considerable

5:Hammond M-5 (1948-1950)1956
EH1 Greece EH1

XVI

EPILOGUE

THE WATERS OF MARAH

Thou only art more excellent than all the forests of cedars; whereon hung the Life of the world, whereon Christ triumphed and through death overcame death for evermore.

AMONGST the miscellaneous papers of Dr. Covel which now repose in the British Museum, there is a letter addressed to the Doctor from "The Coach Office" on December 21st, 1714, by one Humfrey Wanley. Covel—still industriously accumulating "Brick, Stone and Timber" for his book on the state of the Greek Church—had apparently asked this correspondent whether he had ever sounded Arsenius, Metropolitan of Thebais, with whom he had had some association since the latter's arrival in England, about his belief in the matter of transubstantiation.

Mr. Wanley replies, somewhat irritably, to the effect that on the previous Monday he had succeeded in extracting a highly unsatisfactory profession of faith, "craftily worded", from the Metropolitan and his archimandrite. "I told them", he goes on, "I believed it was taken from some book I had heretofore read: They replied it is taken from the Liturgies of Basil and Chrysostome. I told 'em roundly, the Question was not about what Chrysostome or Basil believed, but about what they themselves believed; They answered, They believe as those saints did."

Poor Arsenius! He must have had a trying time of it in this country, what with his constant financial difficulties (rendered all the greater by the necessity of providing for an oddly assorted following that included "Gennadius, a Cypriot and Archimandrite, and Kathegumenos of Alexandria, with four Deacons, an Anagnostes, a Cook and an Interpreter,"—who, says Wanley, "consume all") and his inability to enter into the subtle disputations of the English divines. Nobody seems to have known what to do with these jolly Easterlings; the universities would not be pestered with them and the Bishop of London tried to

5:Hammond M-5 (1948-1950)1956
EH1 Greece EH1

persuade them that they must quickly be gone. "The poor Archbishop", it is related, "cried out like a child when my Lord of London told him he must Depart." Clearly, the Metropolitan of Thebais was no theologian and felt himself quite out of his depth in controversies about the 'grand Dogma'. Nor was it otherwise with the majority of his contemporaries: "From a Native Greek or Easterling", writes Covel, "who never was out of his country, (though he was there a Man of some Dignity) I never could meet with any tolerable reasoning or answer towards the clearing of this point. Many of my acquaintance would avoid any set discourse about these matters, desiring rather to be quiet and not to embarrass themselves about these, φρικτὰ μυστήρια (as they called them) dreadfull or hidden mysteries."

For all his want of book-learning, however, the bishop's instincts were sound. In transcribing Chrysostom and Basil ("a copie . . . badly spelt and badly accented", says Humfrey Wanley) rather than hazarding a personal opinion, he and Gennadius were appealing not to the private views of two theologians, but to the common faith of all Orthodox Christians; Chrysostom and Basil did but bear witness to this common tradition.

From the day when darkness fell upon the empire of Constantine down to our own time, the Greek Christian has held fast with remarkable tenacity to the faith committed to his charge. He has, for the most part, been little capable of expounding this faith—certainly not in a manner likely to carry conviction with the western theologian. Nevertheless, throughout the dark night of Turkish dominion he has continued to cling at any rate to the outward forms of sound doctrine, and to live to the best of his power in the liturgical tradition inherited from an earlier and more creative epoch. This was no time for unprofitable speculation and the subtleties of the vanished schools, but for striving to preserve the royal treasure entrusted to his keeping.

Now, in our own day, the faithfulness with which through long centuries of oppression a host of unremembered parish priests and simple Christians held fast the traditions of the fathers is beginning to bear fruit. The Greek theologian, furnished once more with a scientific equipment not inferior to that of his western colleague, is rediscovering the marvellous riches of the incomparable treasure locked away these many centuries, and entering into his proper heritage. Unlike the Russian theologian of the diaspora—upon whom enforced contact with western ways of thought has already acted as a powerful stimulus—the

/34 cont./

wishers. People are formed into groups and visit every house where the table is set in the center of the main room with different drinks, colored eggs and good food. The groups crack /p. 85 skipped in original numbering/ /36/ an egg and wish the hostess saying, "Christ is risen", and the house owner answers, "Truly he is risen". 796 574

Children run through the streets dressed in their new clothes and carry colored eggs and candies. These are the days when the houses are open to every one. The recreation that these three days offer to these people is far greater than all the rest of the holidays of the year. For the Orthodox church the birth of Christ does not have so much importance as the resurrection of Christ which shows the Athanasia of the spirit. [779]

At this time of the year everything takes life in nature, too. The almond trees, the cherry trees, the pear trees are in blossom. The fields are green and nature takes the appearance of living again. All these combined leave an unresistable influence upon every person. Through such recreation which is a part of their religion, the people forgive each other and old hatreds give way to renewed friendship and forgiveness. It is surprising to note how much influence these holidays have in the lives of the people that live together. The spirit of hospitality, the spirit of giving to those that do not have, the spirit of taking active part in village movements and the blind obedience to the orders of the higher rank, are a result of these traditionally influenced holidays that are represented by different Saints. Recreation is thus closely associated with the /37/religious holidays. 796 571 182 517

Play of Children. Whether at school or outside of school the children do not have organized recreation. At the school the weekly exercises which are more or less military are given by the teacher. The children have two recess periods of ten minutes each from 8-12. At these periods they devise their own play. At home the child has no time for play. He or she will graze the oxen or weed the garden and fields, sweep the yard and help in housework. While very young the children are taught to work and 857 [872]

Not all the older peasants attended school as children, or attended it for more than three or four years; and often what literacy they did have was lost in the course of time, because they had no opportunity to use it. There are no libraries in the villages or in most of the provincial centres. There is also no pattern of reading the Bible, which has maintained reading knowledge in other lands. In Greece the translation of the Bible into modern Greek was forbidden until recent years. The men, however, do read the newspapers with care, when they find them, and they have a detailed knowledge and a private opinion on international and national events and policies; politics, well understood, forms the basis of most discussions, in village or city. The satire on the Court of Petty Offences reports a case where two simple workers on the bus, engrossed in a discussion of the Spanish Civil War, use the perspiring back of another passenger as the map of Spain upon which to follow the manoeuvres of the two armies. The incident is amusing, but not surprising to Greek readers. A book on nutrition urges housewives to pattern their planning on the principles of the British monarchy, not those of the Italian monarchy, assuming knowledge of the principles underlying the difference.

In the cities, there is much intellectual activity on a high level. Many people write articles or poems or stories for their own satisfaction in their leisure time. Conversation presupposes wide reading. The inexpensive paper-bound volumes of Greek works, as well as of translations of foreign works, old and contemporary, make such reading possible. There are 10 daily papers in Athens, and a number of magazines catering to literary tastes, or addressed to simpler people. Magazines carry reports of new scientific developments throughout the world, and a number of educational articles. Those addressed to the *cosmakis*, the simple people, carry articles on child and maternal care, have cooking and sewing hints, as well as columns of personal advice. The newspapers maintain a high literacy and scholarly standard.

RELIGION

Religion and the Church are almost synonymous for the Greeks; and the Greek Orthodox religion is entirely synonymous with Greekness. When the Greek says: "Is he a Christian?" he means "Is he a Greek?" The Greek Church is the main factor in Greek continuity among emigrants nowadays. Throughout the past centuries, the Church has maintained Greek consciousness in many communities in Asia Minor, where the people spoke Turkish as a mother tongue and followed Turkish customs. The few Protestant Greeks occupy an ambiguous position and find it difficult to explain that they are